

ALPENA, MICH., AUGUST 24, 1894.

CASPER ALPERN, OF THE ALPENA FISH COMPANY.

(RICHARD RATHBUN).

Had a long interview with Mr. Alpern. *A. Gen.*

*Mr. Alpern*  
He is apparently the Alpena Fish Co., a very shrewd, active, German Jew, who has been engaged in fishing from here for some 22 years. He is a pusher, and certainly accomplishes as much as any one could from this fishery. He has a very large tug the "Maxwell A". He says it is the largest fishing tug on the lakes, unless it may be the "Agitator" of Booth, which was patterned after it somewhat. It certainly is the largest tug in the business. I have yet seen. Then he has a smaller tug, and yet a good sized one, and several sail boats, stationed about 12 miles from Alpena. These are all engaged in gill netting. Besides these he

*g. tug*  
*boats*

P.  
no  
runs a number of pounds.

g. replacing P.  
He says that in this district gill netting is superceding the pounds, which is contrary to what we found farther north. The reason he gives is that the pound net grounds are giving out, and in Thunder Bay at least he claims it is due to fouling of the bottom.

Fish decrease cause  
He is one of the few who claims that fishing has had no effect on the abundance of fish, unless it may be that they have taken too many very small whitefish. The causes will be found explained in his interview-- stormy weather, pollutions from sawmills, etc. Neither does he believe that the planting of whitefish fry has done any good in this region, though it may in other localities. hatchery m.f.  
He has worked the entire thing out to his satisfaction, and is very clear in his notion about regulations. They are made to  
Reg.

His idea of regul.

fit his business, and are based upon what will profit him most.

*Regulate size of fish*

He doesn't want to handle small fish, and he places the limit at 1 lb. for whitefish (dressed) and pickerel (round). He would prohibit the taking or handling of smaller sizes, but he would not regulate the mesh in any way. They should be allowed to fish such nets as they pleased.

*Regulating mesh*

*Close season*

He would not have a close season, but would oblige the fishermen to take and fertilize the eggs of the whitefish during their spawning season, and also to furnish the State and United States with all the eggs required by them.

*Fishermen return spawn.*

*Opposed to proposed legislation*

He is opposed to the legislation proposed by the State Commission, and has had enough influence to prevent the passage of any measures which might interfere with his business.

*Fisherman's  
bill*

He gave me a copy of the minutes of the Michigan State Fisherman's Association, which was organized in 1893 to protect their interests. The State Commissioner's bill of 1893 was defeated by them, and they had a substitute bill, which, however, did not pass. He is in favor of protection after his own pattern, but would have nothing else,

*Mr. Alpern's  
judgment  
value*

Since the above was written, I have heard from others about Mr. Alpern certain things which indicate that his judgment is not of the best, and that in a business way he has not been successful. Under those circumstances can his views regarding the condition and needs of the fisheries be considered reliable? He has made a great deal of money fishing, but seems to be a theorist in the matter of improving methods, perfecting his tugs, etc., which has made him very extravagant, without an equivalent return.

He spends two dollars where he makes one. His business is now mortgaged for \$30,000 to one of the banks in Alpena, and my informant was under the impression that he was working on a salary of \$1,200 a year. While he pushes the business for all it is worth, he is not very favorably regarded in Alpena. He apparently ranks high among the big fishermen of the State, however, and many are likely to support him in his views, whether they believe in them or not. They all fight together against the State Fish Commission. Mr. Tulian says he did not use to have the unfavorable opinion he now holds regarding the benefits of propagation, and he thinks that he took up that belief as a stroke against the State Fish Commission. He is fighting that organization because of its attempt to enact new restrictive measures, and he would like to show them alto-

*Heating*

*Reasons for  
fighting State  
Organization*

gether wrong. However, he is not opposed to State appropriations for hatching, and has always given great assistance to the United States hatchery.

One of the great inconsistencies of his position is the item in his bill obliging fishermen to fertilize and plant all the whitefish and trout spawn they can obtain. Why do so if propagation accomplishes nothing?



